

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
THE DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

TO : The Secretary
THROUGH : S/S
FROM : INR - Roger Hilsman

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INTELLIGENCE NOTE: US MOVES CATCH LATIN COMMUNISTS OFF BALANCE

Shock, panic among leftist groups. Communists and pro-Communists throughout Latin America were clearly caught off guard by the US moves in the Caribbean. In most places, the initial reaction was one of shock and frustration at not having been prepared by Moscow. In Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador, and most Central American countries, Communist concern over possible anticommunist reprisals weakened moves to demonstrate against the US quarantine. In Uruguay, party leaders strongly feared that the USSR would back down in the face of US firmness. In the Dominican Republic, Communist leaders went into hiding.

Some feeble demonstrations mounted. Amid a general public attitude of serious concern over the threat to peace posed by the Soviet build-up, leftist groups are reluctant to protest too loudly against the US moves. Only in Argentina and Peru have anti-US demonstrations taken a mildly violent turn, and these were readily brought under control by police. In Uruguay, Brazil, Chile, and Venezuela, small demonstrations were staged but were generally regarded as failures. In each country, the response to calls for popular support has been below that obtained during the Foreign Ministers' meeting at Punta del Este last January, and even further below that at the time of the April 1961 invasion.

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Planning reflects

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Planning reflects anxiety and confusion. In a few countries (Argentina, Guatemala) plans are being laid for greater Communist-sponsored violence in the event the US launches an invasion against Cuba. However, in Brazil, Ecuador, and Mexico, plans show a continued reluctance to resort to violence. In Brazil, plans concentrate on influencing official policy through personal contacts and public protests, but do not look toward violent action. In Venezuela, CP leaders doubt they have the ability to mobilize significant mass public opinion against the government. Elsewhere, planners are unable to agree on tactics or are awaiting instructions from Moscow.